

BIG STUDIES: Auth. Per.

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PREJUDICE AND THE AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY*

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In the following series of propositions I shall attempt to describe the authoritarian personality. These descriptive propositions are derived from the following sources: The Authoritarian Personality, by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson and Sanford; Anti-Semitism and Emotional Disorder, by Ackerman and Jahoda, and The Dynamics of Prejudice, by Bettelheim and Janowitz. In addition to these clinical investigations, I shall report for the first time additional data derived from large-scale field studies in which it has been possible to validate some of the concepts developed in the clinical studies, especially the California study.

In considering these propositions, it is well to keep in mind that, as inferences about the authoritarian personality, they are limited by the following factors:

1. The descriptive propositions are based largely upon the comparisons of extremes - i.e., people who score "high" as against people who score "low" on various attitude scales such as the California Attitude Scales. Dividing the data into these two extreme dichotomies of "highs" and "lows" leaves unexplored the large region of "middles" and deviant cases.
2. They represent also more or less unusual "population groups", such as prison inmates, patients of psychiatrists, college students, veterans, etc. The bulk of the early subjects used in the California study were college girls.

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3. While a fairly clear-cut picture of the high authoritarian emerges, the picture of the low is not quite so clear. In fact, he is generally described in "other-side-of-the-coin" terms.
4. The characterological descriptions which emerge from these clinical studies seem to hold fairly consistently for male subjects, but not for females.
5. Since these investigations were essentially clinical and psychological in nature, many of the social-psychological and sociological correlates of authoritarianism were not developed, although the authors on many occasions have indicated clearly their awareness of the importance of the social situation. Additional data now available to us may fill in some of the gaps.

The authoritarian personality may be described according to how he sees himself, how he sees others, how he views the world, and the values he holds dear.

How the Authoritarian Sees Himself (through the eyes of the clinician)

The authoritarian's picture of himself is fuzzy. Basically, whether he is aware of it or not, he feels weak and lacking in self-reliance. He has gnawing doubts about his group-belongingness. He feels that he has been emotionally and materially deprived in the past; and he anticipates such deprivation in the future. Underneath a Milquetoast exterior there is smoldering resentment and hostility; aggression of a destructive sort is latent within him.

These feelings of damaged self-esteem lead the authoritarian to: (1) ethnocentrism, which involves a stereotyped glorification of his own group and a strong

stereotyped rejection of other groups; (2) a need to reject weakness in himself as well as in others; (3) fear of punishment and of deprivation, and (4) envy and resentment of those he believes to possess qualities he lacks. He is thus likely to look outside of himself for the causes of his difficulties (extropunitiveness) through such familiar psychological mechanisms as displacement, projection, etc.

How the Authoritarian Thinks (conceptualization)

The authoritarian tends to think in concrete rather than in abstract terms. He becomes anxious in unstructured situations. (When you ask children what they would do to improve the world, the authoritarian youngsters say they would clean the streets and remove "all that garbage"; the liberal youngsters talk like readers of the New Republic who would want a world police force.) On poll questionnaires, authoritarians turn in the greatest proportion of indecisive answers such as "don't know" or "none, no one".

They operate conceptually on a limited number of levels in a rigid, compulsive manner. (By this I do not mean that they are unintelligent, but rather that they use their intelligence in a restricted fashion.) Rokeach has brilliantly demonstrated that the rigidity of the authoritarian is not applied merely to ethnic situations: his authoritarian subjects, matched for intelligence with a control group of non-authoritarians, perseverated in the solving of arithmetic and map-reading problems. Taught to solve these problems in a complicated manner, they stuck doggedly to this method of problem-solving even though the problems further down in the test could be solved quite simply as well. The non-authoritarians switched almost immediately to the easier problem-solving method.

The stereotypy of the authoritarian differs qualitatively from the stereotypy of others. Granted that stereotypy is a common and perhaps necessary shortcut

in the thinking process, the authoritarian uses stereotypy much more readily and much more irrationally. In employing stereotypes in his social perception, he is more likely than non-authoritarians to use labels which denote inborn and inhering attributes rather than attributes related to social causation.

There is yet another characteristic of the authoritarian's way of conceptualizing, and this is his tendency toward magical thinking. Magical thinking, like stereotypy, is a more or less common form of thinking. The essence of magical thinking (see Freud's Totem and Taboo) is that to think or wish something is to do it, or to have it done - miraculously. Often magical thoughts are concerned with appeasing avenging gods or other authorities. Superstition is one such form of magical thinking. Authoritarians, for example, are likely to think in catastrophic terms: they feed on talk of earthquakes, floods, pestilence, atom bombs.

How the Authoritarian Views the World

With such a view of himself and with such conceptualizing, it is small wonder that the authoritarian's view of the world as a place to live in is that of a jungle, of an evil, menacing place. He believes that "wars are inevitable" because man is inherently bad. He accepts more readily the statement that "Some day a flood or an earthquake will destroy the whole world". It is easy to see how one can take the edge off the sheer enjoyment of living by such a Weltanschauung.

Politically and economically, the authoritarian tends to be conservative. But his conservatism is related more to his fear of change of the status quo than to his firm belief in the goodness of existing institutions. Actually he is a "pseudo-conservative". According to Levinson, the true conservative may favor existing institutions and oppose government interference in business, etc., but

he is not also ethnocentric in the bargain. The "pseudo-conservative" is strong in both his political-economic conservatism and in his ethnocentrism.

The Values of the Authoritarian

The authoritarian prizes social status highly; this would follow from his perception of people as occupying status niches within hierarchical systems. Being power-oriented, he worships strength and abhors weakness. He believes that "What the world needs is a strong leader". Authority for him must be strict and must be submitted to. Adult authoritarians believe that "Obedience to one's parents is the most important thing in the world". Child authoritarians believe that "A good father is strict". (Compare this statement of the authoritarian child with the statement of the non-authoritarian child that a good father is "someone you have fun with".)

The authoritarian is also a moral purist. His attitude toward sex is puritanical. Likewise he often expresses strong religiosity in terms of church attendance, etc.; but for him churchgoing is more in the nature of submission to a higher authority than an expression of true religious conviction.

The authoritarian is also anti-emotional and anti-intellectual.

Finally - and this is true for both male and female authoritarians - femininity is equated with weakness. They see woman's place in the home.

Further Validation of Propositions About the Authoritarian Personality

These propositions, as you can see, are essentially psychological in character, but they constituted hunches which further investigation might explore. Within the past three years, it has been possible to apply some of these concepts to large-

scale (samples of about 1200) field investigations, three of which have already been completed. Two studies were based on probability samples in one large and one middle-sized American community; a third used a nationwide sample. Several additional propositions emerge from these field investigations:

- All anti-Semites are high authoritarians, but not all authoritarians are anti-Semites. (This is based on a latent attribute analysis by Paul Lazarsfeld.)
- The Authoritarian Index - 5 items taken from the California F Scale - is the best single predictor of anti-minority prejudice when used in a poll-type survey.
- The bulk of high authoritarians tend to be older people - that is, over 45 - mostly female, with low educational levels, low income status, and a fairly low news exposure index. On a scale of anti-Communism, they fall in the "least anti-Communist" group.
- The authoritarian's use of stereotypy differs from the use of stereotypy by low authoritarians. When the authoritarian blames some group for its political beliefs or for alleged undesirable behavior, he is apt to do so in eugenic terms: he will refer to their ethnicity and their foreign origin, etc. The non-authoritarian, on the other hand, looks to external social causality rather than inherent badness to explain group behavior: he will talk about poverty, lack of education, oppression, incitement by agitators.
- The high authoritarians worry, like all other groups today, about the possibility of a war with Russia soon, but they, more than other groups,

worry about the possibility of our being attacked by atom bombs. We believe this ties in with a tendency to magical thinking.

-- There are probably at least two kinds of high authoritarianism: one kind is strongly anti-Communistic, the other is only faintly anti-Communistic. One kind of high (a small, esoteric proportion) has a high level of education, and a high level of news exposure, and is strongly anti-Communistic; most of those who join him in his strong anti-Communism are today low authoritarians. Had such a study been conducted in the 1940's, these esoteric highs would have been strong anti-Communists then, but they would not have been joined by the low authoritarians. The other kind of high - the run-of-the-mill type - is low in education and low in news exposure, but his world view is so limited that Communism for him has but a low saliency.

-- Additional evidence of the authoritarian's extremely limited world outlook and extremely limited concern for what is going on around him is displayed by the high proportion of "don't know" and other indecisive responses. These indecisive responses diminish sharply when the questions are structured by means of checklists.

Propositions on Causality

The studies from which the picture of the authoritarian personality is derived are not growth studies; they are like wafer-thin sections of tissue sliced off the biologist's microtome. Causality cannot, of course, be determined by cross-sectional studies; but the social scientist is warranted - and if not warranted, tempted - to make inferences of causality. And the studies to which I have referred contain their share of inferential causal propositions which have

yet to be validated. These can be described as follows: The authoritarian personality gets that way because:

1. As a child he lacked sufficient unconditional love. He experienced emotional and perhaps material deprivation. He was unable as a child to develop the inner controls the adult needs to regulate his impulses.
2. Discipline was often harsh and strict within a father-dominated home. (This was held to be the chief differentiating factor in Germany: ~~anti-Nazis came from mother-dominated homes~~. For those who became Nazis, submission to authority in adult life was then not only easy but necessary.) The need for parental love, the need to have the parent also provide material goods, and the fear of punishment for hostility forced the child to repress his hostility. In adult life, he could afford to release some of this dammed-up hostility against socially-sanctioned victims.
3. Feeling between members of the family, especially between mother and father, was not good. This thwarted the identification process in the child because it left him no one to model his behavior after. As a result, the child was not able to develop the kind of conscience or superego which would militate against prejudice.
4. The authoritarian adult is immature and infantile in his interpersonal relationships. This infantilism is something akin to arrested emotional development. The mature liberal adult has successfully passed through the phases of development which the authoritarian has not quite "completed".

5. Non-authoritarians, on the other hand, "got that way" chiefly because they did not experience the trauma listed here and in addition were able to rebel against parental authority.
6. Prejudice is not learned in the sense of indoctrination at the parent's knee, but rather is a derivative of these "non-specific" factors. These factors fashion a personality which turns to prejudice tropistically, as a moth turns to a flame. Also, according to Bettelheim and Janowitz, subsequent favorable experiences with significant adults may overcome in some individuals the trauma sustained at the hands of their parents.

Appraisal of These Concepts

The skeptical reader and listener - especially if he has followed closely the recent developments in child-rearing theory and practice - is apt to throw up his hands at this point. It would appear to him that the solution of all human problems in our culture has been boiled down by the psychotherapeutically-oriented to this one gold nugget of cure: Mamma Love Your Baby, Papa Love Mamma and Baby Too. (Some wags insist that the careful following of these panaceas will leave baby 'way out on a limb on the treetop: everybody is so busy loving each other and baby too that he has nobody left to love. One can see a sudden swing back to child-marriages.)

Seriously, what the skeptic objects to is what seems to him to be a glaring omission of the social situation. To this criticism I can, prior to the discussion which is to follow, make at least two rejoinders: (1) In many ways, the criticism is just - but you must have a starting point. The study of prejudice must be approached on many levels. The psychologist by training and inclination has been

interested in understanding the motivations, perceptions, judgments, etc., of the prejudiced individual. This is a legitimate pursuit; but I agree that it must not become the end in itself. The colleague in the other social science disciplines has an important role to play: he has been playing it and can do even more, provided he doesn't get lost somewhere in a depersonalized four-fold table.

The second rejoinder I would make in the absence of some of the investigators I have quoted here today is that they have expressed awareness of culture and the objective situation. The Ackerman and Jahoda study, for example, posits at least one kind of prejudiced individual for whom prejudice is not too heavily ego-involved. For him group pressures are the chief determinant, and he can readily change his prejudice without any damage to his ego structure when the cultural climate is changed. For others, their prejudice is more ego-involved; for them, change would be difficult. But the chances are that prejudice is a combination of factors.

The Need for an Interdisciplinary Approach

Yet in order not to distort the clear meaning and purpose of the investigators, I must say that they would stand by their belief that: (1) the individual does not invent an ideology, but instead takes it ready-made from the culture around him; (2) there is a predisposition toward the acceptance of certain well-organized syndromic ideologies; (3) this predisposition, this readiness to act, or what Coutou might call a tinsit (tendency-in-situation) is a personalistic and psychological one - even though its ultimate origins are societal.

It is the individual with a tendency to be prejudiced and anti-democratic, and in short to behave systematically in certain ways with regard to authority,

who has been called the authoritarian personality. (Perhaps a better though longer name might be the authoritarian-responsive personality.)

If we are willing at least to accept the concept of The Authoritarian Personality as a model which describes a relatively common mode of adaptation to inter-group relations (in the same sense that Robert Merton has set up models of social adaptation), we can avoid the argument of which came first - personality's egg or society's chicken.

We are dealing, after all, with problems of causation and prediction, and as Gordon Allport stated in his 1950 Lewin Memorial Award address, there are many approaches to the study of prejudice, including the psychological approach. It is fruitless to argue at this point that the individual is a product of the society in which he lives; this we all accept and need not belabor. What is being said, however, as a matter of emphasis, is that to understand the interpersonal and inter-group behavior of the prejudiced person, especially to explain how he holds himself ready to join with others in the use of prejudice, we must understand the role prejudice plays within his emotional economy. If the outlook of the psychologist has been limited; if he has overlooked other more fruitful hypotheses; if he has committed other scientific sins - at least he has started something. The social problem of prejudice is too vast to be handled by any one social science discipline. The findings I have discussed with you today are at least suggestive of a vital link between prejudice and a democratic society. The study of prejudice with the purpose of combatting it as a social evil requires the simultaneous and cooperative effort of virtually all social science disciplines.